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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001739

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/14/2018
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: CLASHES BETWEEN YITZHAR SETTLERS AND ASIRA
AL-QABALIYAH

REF: JERUSALEM 1710

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese, per reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

[11](#). (C) SUMMARY: On September 13, clashes occurred between Yitzhar (near Nablus) settlers and Palestinians in the village of Asira al-Qabaliyah. Police have not yet arrested any Palestinians or settlers. The settlers said they were responding to an arson attack against a caravan and the knifing of a nine-year-old settler boy at Yitzhar's Shalhevet outpost hours earlier. Settler leaders have played down the attack on Asira al-Qabaliyah. Villagers said the settlers arrived firing weapons and throwing rocks, resulting in eight Palestinian injuries and damage to three houses. They deny that the attack on Yitzhar happened as the settlers claim and have condemned the settler attack on their village. END SUMMARY.

Yitzharites attack Asira al-Qabaliyah

[12](#). (C) Settlers from Yitzhar and Palestinians in the neighboring village of Asira al-Qabaliyah clashed September [13](#). A videotape of the incident filmed by villagers using cameras from the NGO B'Tselem shows settlers, IDF, and Israeli police in Asira al-Qabaliyah on September 13. Villagers said settlers threw rocks and fired weapons, resulting in eight Palestinian injuries, and damage to three homes, several cars, and water tanks. Settlers said they were responding to an earlier Palestinian attack on Yitzhar's Shalhevet outpost that included burning a vacant caravan and knifing and tossing a nine-year-old off a ledge. Press report that a settler woman witnessed the incident and that Israeli police initiated an investigation, but no Palestinians or settlers have been arrested as of September [18](#). According to press, a little known Arab-Israeli group from Galilee claimed responsibility for the attack.

[13](#). (C) Activists representing the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS) NGO told Poloff that Palestinian ambulances were prevented from entering Asira al-Qabaliyah to treat the wounded for two hours. They said some villagers were handcuffed and detained during the incident and the IDF sealed off the village with checkpoints, allowing minimal entry and exit September 13. During the night following these events, activists said, the IDF conducted raids on four separate homes early in the morning, but did not detain any villagers.

Settler Leaders Don't Support
the Attack, but Avoid Condemnation

[14](#). (C) Yesha Council Chairman Dani Dayan told Poloff that he had visited the boy in the hospital in Petah Tikva late September 13. He said the boy was stabbed seven times, but

survived. "I don't like what my guys did but let's get serious, no one got seriously hurt in Asira, while in Yitzhar there was an intention to kill," he said. He added that Israeli police told him no one in Asira al-Qabaliyah was injured by live fire. Gush Etzion Regional Council Chairman and Yesha Council member Shaul Goldstein told Poloff that the settler reaction "was not justified," but the media is "a dog looking to bite the settlers," focusing only on settler aggression, not the reported Palestinian attack. Settler contact Yisrael Medad told Poloff that "if the security forces were doing their job, we wouldn't have to do it ourselves."

Palestinians Deny Arson and Knife Attack

15. (C) Head of the Asira al-Qabaliyah village council Hosni Sharif told PolSpec that after "a few hundred" settlers entered the village, the IDF acted to protect them, including by firing at villagers. Sharif and Rabbis for Human Rights activist Zacharia Sadeh told Poloff they do not believe settler accounts of the initial attack. President of the South Nablus Services Council Mansour Tawfiq Dmeidi also denied to Poloff that the attack had occurred as reported by the settlers, saying, "You'd have to be crazy to think you could attack Yitzhar and escape."

Increasing Settler Violence

16. (C) The events of September 13 follow aggressive settler actions against the IDF at Yad Yair September 10

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(reftel). According to Mansour Tawfiq from the South Nablus Services Council, on September 14, settlers from Itamar (next to Yitzhar) descended into Awarta village and burned 70 dunams of agricultural fields. According to Sadeh from Rabbis for Human Rights, settlers from Shevut Rahel settlement (northeast of Ramallah) entered the neighboring village of Qaryut September 15 and began prematurely harvesting the villagers' olives.
MARCHESE